

# Complutense Art Centre. A new space for the heritage and the contemporary art in the Complutense University of Madrid

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## Abstract

*Complutense Art Centre (c art c) is located in the centre of the University City. In 2009, it began with a new room of temporary exhibitions approximately 400m<sup>2</sup> for showing contemporary artists and the heritage of the university. In a second phase, 700m<sup>2</sup> will be adapted in a permanent exhibition space. The aim is to show a selection of the most emblematic works of our heritage.*

## Complutense Art Centre

Complutense Art Centre (c art c) wants to be a place where the heritage and contemporary art live together; a place where people know about the sciences, the arts and the history. We support exhibitions of contemporary art exhibitions and product of research of our patrimony. The museums of the university, besides preserving heritage, represent the history of the institution. They must bear



Fig. 1 - Logo Complutense Art Centre, Madrid

identity signs that relate the past to the present. It is possible to form this idea across the creation of a common space where the different collections coexist and are visible in a permanent exhibition by means of the selection of the most significant works of art. In addition, the university museums can study in depth their collections with the production of temporary exhibitions.

## The university

The Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) is a quality public university in the service of society. Along with the Polytechnic University of Madrid since 2009, the Moncloa Campus is recognized as *Campus of International Excellence*, a project "international reference in research, training and innovation". University City was declared a cultural heritage in 1999, with the category of historical site, by the community of Madrid, in recognition of its architectural, landscape, nature and heritage as home to the cultural legacy of the ancient university founded by Cardinal Cisneros in Alcalá de Henares in 1499.

The aforementioned requires keeping up with this reality through the innovative project, still in the process, which I will explain below: Complutense Art Centre.

## The place

The Complutense Art Centre, which opened in October 2009, is located in the heart of the University City of Madrid, in the district of Moncloa. As an example of coexistence of institutions, it is on the ground floor of the current *Costume Museum / Research Center of Ethnography Heritage*, a national museum of the Ministry of Culture. The building, which opened in 1975 as a Spanish Museum of contemporary art, is the work of architects Jaime Lopez de Asiain and Ángel Díaz Domínguez, who followed the design specifications of the Congress of Museum Architecture of 1968. The project was the National Architecture Prize in 1969.

The land, on which the Costume Museum stands, was ceded by the Complutense University for 50 years to the Ministry of Culture. Approaching the expiration date of such assignment and seeing that

the economic crisis paralyzes any alteration, Complutense University has opted for cohabitation and temporary assignment spaces.

The location of Complutense Art Centre means that most of our audience is from the university.

However, we receive public who visit the Costume Museum as well as external audiences who are attracted by our activities and exhibitions; this is a big advantage!

## Objectives

One of our goals is to combine different types of adult audiences, whether student or outsider audiences. In this effort to join diverse audiences, we are concerned in having visibility, not only on the web UCM with its own site *c art c*,<sup>1</sup> but also in social networks like Facebook<sup>2</sup> and Twitter<sup>3</sup>, with a following of almost 1,000 followers.

The Complutense University of Madrid has got a considerable cultural heritage, a testimony of its long academic career and social life. This heritage is characterized by its variety and spread in different museums and offices. The offices especially are creating problems in terms of conservation, inventory, custody and dissemination.

For this reason, another goal is to show this important historical heritage of the UCM, which composes the series of cultural works of art accumulated throughout history. To this end, we believe in the Art Centre as a symbol of identity, where you can display the historical and artistic heritage as well as it is being a dynamic focus on new artistic trends and an artistic forum of culture and social integration. When we started on the path, we set the following objectives:

- To have an international projection;
- To be a place of innovation in the arts, cultural integration and the promotion of relations between the Complutense University and Madrid city;
- To integrate the 12 museums and the 18 art-historical and scientific-technique collections in a single exhibition display;<sup>4</sup>
- To show the art treasures in museums and collections as a Complutense historical reference;
- To get citizen participation, students, professors, etc.;
- To integrate the university community;
- To collaborate between universities with exhibitions and the creation of coproduced projects.

The lines that define our exhibitions are supported by the emerging art of young artists, the commitment to be a reference centre of the best contemporary art, as well as belief in the richness of our heritage and museums as an undisputed content of our exhibition projects. Moreover, we want to give a special boost to complementary activities whereby visitors can debate, research and participate.

## Phases

In October 2009, first phase of *c art c* was completed with the opening of the temporary exhibition space. The second phase is in process. It will be a space where there will be a permanent exhibition of the heritage of university, selecting the most relevant works of art from the museums and collections. A third phase would close a more comprehensive site: warehouses, offices and an auditorium. These phases depend on the solution of economic difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> [www.ucm.es/info/memorias/culturaydeporte/c\\_arte\\_c/c%20arte%20c%20nueva/index.htm](http://www.ucm.es/info/memorias/culturaydeporte/c_arte_c/c%20arte%20c%20nueva/index.htm) (accessed November 14, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> [es-es.facebook.com/pages/c-arte-c-Centro-Arte-Complutense/221493565399](https://es-es.facebook.com/pages/c-arte-c-Centro-Arte-Complutense/221493565399) (accessed December 11, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> [twitter.com/c\\_arte\\_c](https://twitter.com/c_arte_c) (accessed December 11, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> [portal.ucm.es/web/museos](http://portal.ucm.es/web/museos) (accessed December 11, 2011).

Nowadays, the description of the *c art c* could be: a space, on the ground floor of the Costume Museum, consists of two exhibition rooms. The first one, 400m<sup>2</sup>, has all the advances to develop exhibitions of all kinds: air conditioning, mobile walls, multimedia, lighting, furniture, warehouse, etc. The second of the art exhibition room, or 'Anexo' *c art c*, 700m<sup>2</sup> still undeveloped, is used for activities such as conferences, concerts, exhibitions, experimental workshop, etc.

### The management

The management of *c art c* is overseen by the Vice Chancellor of Attention to the University Community, who ensures that the departments of economic, museums, graphic design and web publications work together.

The technical team of *c art c* consists of the Vice Chancellor of Attention to the University Community, the chief of the technical culture unit, the person in charge of institutional relations, the exhibition designer and coordinator, the graphic designer and the staff of the museum area.

There is an annual budget complemented by specific sponsors and contributions which make possible the development of exhibitions and other cultural activities.

The selection of projects is done in two ways: internally and through an expert commission. The first is decided by the Vice Chancellor of Attention to the University Community to consider the suitability of the exhibition project or activity.

The other route selection is shaped by the expert commission. *c art c* has a 'prize' called *Proposals c art c* for the production of exhibition projects. This provides a fixed budget for the implementation of these projects. Throughout the year we receive different projects that are selected by the committee. They are curators and critics. We are working on a new 'prize' for space *Anexo c art c* to select other activities.



Fig. 2 - Empty temporary exhibition room in the Complutense Art Centre



Fig. 3 - Exhibition *Black. Central African Art*

### Exhibitions

Since 2009 there have been many outstanding exhibitions which I will try to group together. I will remark the most important aspects about them.

- About exhibitions of Complutense heritage:  
*Black. Central African Art*: there were concerts, conferences and guided visits; complementary activities which complemented the exhibition. It will be the next donation to the university thanks to some good management. We got to show the collection in two itinerant exhibitions

more. Students of conservation cleaned the works of art. The curator and the collector was a professor of our university.

- About exhibitions of contemporary art:

*Guillermo Llobet*: it was a support to a young artist and his interesting project. This exhibition has gone to other universities.

*Videoart made in Spain*: we receive an itinerant exhibition from another university and it was complemented by meetings with the artists.

*Art Barter*: traded along with Spanish artists share their works novice designers by allowing them to offer visitors. People could offer anything but no money.

*Digital Art Meeting*. Multimedia installation complemented by a prize to young artists. The curator was a professor of our university, too.

*AENA Collection*: an excellent collection of contemporary art.

*Paloma Navares*: winner of *Proposals c art c*.

*Alex Francés*: winner of *Proposals c art c*.

*Mira Bernabeu*: winner of *Proposals c art c*.

*The Nature Spirit. Contemporary Japanese Textile Art*.



Fig. 4 - Exhibition *The Nature Spirit. Contemporary Japanese Textile Art*

- About young university artists:

*Intransit*: it is a platform created by the Complutense University of Madrid that advocates establishing professional standards of work between the artistic community college and cultural players operating in each sector.

*Stand By*: final exhibition of fine arts students.

Furthermore, no less interesting, we are going to do two exhibitions in 2012 that combine modernity and artistic Complutense heritage:

- *The Computer Centre at the University of Madrid (1968–1982). From numerical calculation to the interdisciplinary creativity*. It produced a journal, a publication and other activities. It created areas of cooperation relations between science, technology, arts, education and thought. It formed, for the first time in Spain, after many years, interdisciplinary research groups.
- The exhibition about the representation of animals yesterday and today is a project promoted by the group and Nature Art-Science Faculty of Fine Arts: a research on the links and differences between the models of scientific representation of animals belonging to the funds of the Complutense University and new formulations of art in this century.

Finally, as a reflection, I would like to express the need to give visibility to the university heritage in a joint and centralized space. This does not mean we should neglect the university museums or ignore the presence of heritage in the offices, but we saw the opportunity and desirability of developing a project in which contemporary art converge with the spread of heritage of the university. This is our identity.

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